

## **U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Plan to Reduce Sexual Assault and Harassment**

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy is a place where honor, integrity and respect are the guiding principles. That is why we take any allegation of sexual misconduct seriously and are working with Academy leadership to ensure there is a no tolerance and full reporting climate. Every member of the Academy community must feel safe and have confidence in the reporting system designed to identify and hold offenders accountable. This means making sure every student feels empowered to take action for themselves or, on behalf of others, to come forward and alert the appropriate officials to potential problems.

The Academy is working hard to improve its sexual assault awareness program for midshipmen, faculty, and staff. It is also devoting additional resources to the critical area of training and education, as well as bolstering its victims support network.

The following nine goals represent our plan to reduce sexual assault and harassment at the Academy and the progress we are making to address this issue. The U.S. Department of Transportation will work closely with the Maritime Administration leadership and the Academy to achieve these goals:

### **Reinforce a “no tolerance and full reporting” climate.**

- The Academy is expanding assistance to potential victims and is currently interviewing candidates for the position of Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC). The Academy plans to have a SARC on board full time this spring.
- As outlined below, the Academy is also developing new support networks and policies as well as working with the broader commercial maritime community to protect midshipmen on campus and at sea.

### **Improve the incident reporting and recordkeeping system.**

- A revised version of Academy policy and procedures will be completed by spring 2012, which will include an enhanced dual reporting mechanism that provides victims with an option to report sexual assaults anonymously.
- The Academy is will establish a sexual assault prevention and response helpline similar to that established within the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).

### **Improve “at sea” protocols to protect midshipmen and address the climate aboard commercial vessels.**

- The Academy has updated the sea-year component of the training program to ensure midshipmen receive the same level of support in preventing sexual assault or harassment in any environment.
- The Academy also made procedural changes to “at sea” protocols to ensure greater safety at sea and guaranteed rapid response to midshipman’s signal of distress.
- The Maritime Administration and the Academy are developing a plan to engage the maritime industry through programs such as the Ship Operators Cooperative Program to create forums for ship owners, ship operators, and mariner unions to address midshipmen issues related to sexual assault and harassment.

### **Improve faculty, staff, and senior leadership awareness, prevention, and training.**

- Academy officials consulted with their counterparts at the other military service academies and institutions of higher learning to determine best practices to ensure that the Academy’s revised policies are inclusive and comprehensive.

- An expanded program is being developed that not only includes specific training regarding the prevention and response of sexual harassment and violence, but more importantly will incorporate foundational principles that create a work environment free of harassment and bias.
- The SARC will ensure all academy faculty, staff and senior leadership receive sexual harassment awareness and prevention training on an annual basis.

### **Improve midshipman awareness, prevention, and training.**

- The Academy has implemented a network of Midshipman Human Relations Officers (HRO), made up of five Company Human Relations Officers and one Regimental Human Relations Officer, who are specially trained to provide guidance to victims.
- Over the last year, the Human Relations Committee (HRC), a cross-campus group of midshipmen, faculty and staff, increased the frequency of focus groups in order to analyze the campus climate and discuss issues of concern with midshipmen. The HRC has also provided the Superintendent with important recommendations on policy changes and enhancements to training that will be included in the Academy's revised policy.

### **Provide additional staff resources, including hiring a full-time Sexual Assault Response Coordinator.**

- The full-time SARC will play a vital role in the review, revision and administration of sexual assault awareness, prevention and response training and education. The Academy SARC will report directly to either the Office of Civil Rights within DOT or MARAD.
- In the short term, the Academy has implemented a network of Midshipman Human Relations Officers by establishing six midshipman officers, who are specially trained to provide guidance to victims.

### **Improve the support network and interventions.**

- HROs, the majority of whom are female, also play significant and valuable roles in supporting the sexual harassment and sexual assault awareness, prevention, and training program.
- In addition to the hiring of a full-time, dedicated SARC, the Academy is expanding its assistance to victims through a network of advocates that mirrors programs instituted at other service academies.

### **Improve program measurement and evaluation.**

- The Academy is currently contracting with a third party to improve the credibility and standardization of future surveys. Third party surveys and forums are currently utilized by all other military service academies, including the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.
- The Academy will convene meetings with midshipmen to gain a better understanding of the specific nature of the issues they are facing.
- Changes to the Academy's program will include clearly outlined performance goals, milestones and metrics to improve oversight and assess the effectiveness of our new policy and procedures.

### **Increase the gender diversity of Academy employees and the Regiment of Midshipment.**

- The Academy will strengthen its outreach and recruitment efforts to increase gender diversity.